This article seeks to understand the discursive context of the cessation of routine smallpox vaccination in the United States in the early 1970s. The United States has a long tradition of opposition to compulsory smallpox vaccination, usually expressed in terms of concerns about personal liberties, the extent of state authority, and challenges to the hegemony of orthodox biomedicine. The practice of routine smallpox vaccination continued in the United States until its termination in the 1970s, following a 1971 recommendation against the practice issued by the United States Public Health Service. This history investigates the ways in which opposition to compulsory smallpox vaccination in the 1960s and 70s was articulated and understood by contemporaries through an analysis of the rhetoric used in leading medical journals and popular newspapers. It finds that this ultimately successful movement to end routine smallpox vaccination drew upon the language of biomedical authority rather than political protest.

Keywords
Vaccination, Smallpox, History, United States, Anti-vaccination movements.